

The Meanest English Teacher Ever

by Sharron A. Scott

www.freethingsforteachers.com

“Clear your desks,” said Ms. Speight. “This is a pop test.”

As they sat in disbelief, the ninth grade English class mumbled a collective, “What?”

“That’s right, a pop test,” she said emphasizing the last *t* in test.

Ms. Speight was a black woman in her mid- to late-thirties. She had a thin, athletic build and honey-dipped skin. She had been teaching at Smith High School for about seven years, and she was a legend.

Amber raised her hand and decided to speak up for the rest of the ninth graders.

“Yes, Amber,” said Ms. Speight.

“Ms. Speight, I don’t think it’s fair for you to give us a pop test. Not all of us were talking, so all of us shouldn’t be punished. All of us shouldn’t have to take the test.”

Amber was expecting a chorus of “Yeah, that’s rights” from the other ninth graders, but all she heard was teeth chattering and crickets chirping.

“Amber,” Ms. Speight said, raising her eyebrows above her black, English-teacher glasses, “You always have choice. You don’t have to take the test. You can always take a zero.”

“But . . .”

“This conversation is over,” Ms. Speight said confidently. “If you’re going to take the test, clear your desk.”

Amber cleared her desk in defeat.

The little, red-haired, pasty-faced kid in the back was near tears.

While Ms. Speight was passing out tests, an eleventh grader, Lilly, poked her head in.

“Hey, sweetheart! How are you? How’s your dad doing?” asked Ms. Speight.

“Still working at Burger World,” replied Lilly.

“There’s nothing wrong with that. It’s an honest living,” said Ms. Speight. “You should be proud of him.”

“I am,” said Lilly, sheepishly.

“And don’t you have a class you need to be getting too?”

“Yes, m'am”

“Well, hop to it, Girl!”

Lilly laughed and ran off.

Oh, Yuck, thought Amber. I can’t believe Lilly is actual being nice to CAN'T GET A DATE SPEIGHT!

As Amber and the rest of the detainees continued their test, a few more members of the Speight Fan Club popped in to say hello.

The Black Cola delivery man stopped by on his way from filling the up the soda machine in the teacher’s lounge. “Thought you might need one of these,” he said, handing Ms. Speight a diet soda.

“Thank you! You are right on time.”

“Anytime,” said the Black Cola delivery man with a smile and a wink.

Amber could not understand how all these cool kids and the Black Cola guy could actually be cool with Ms. Speight. *Was she paying them or something?*

Amber continued her test begrudgingly. She ran out of lead, so she tapped on her neighbor’s shoulder and asked him for some lead.

“Amber, bring me your paper,” said Ms. Speight.

“But I was just asking him for a piece of lead.”

“I’m not a detective,” said Ms. Speight. “I’m not going to try and figure out what you were talking about. If I say, no talking on a test, then that is exactly what I mean. Bring me you paper.”

“But she really was just asking for some lead,” said Sam, who was close to stuttering.

“But I really wasn’t even talking to you,” said Ms. Speight. Then she looked at Amber and commanded, “Bring me your paper.”

As Amber walked over to give Ms. Speight her paper, she secretly vowed revenge.

Ms. Speight balled the paper up---over one hour’s worth of writing--and put it in the trash can.

You think is over, but it’s not over, thought Amber to herself. *You will pay for this*. And then she laughed (still inside her head) like a comic book villain.

After English class, Amber joined her friends for lunch in the cafeteria.

“I hate my English teacher!” said Amber as she picked up an apple chunk out of her sandwich bag. “You won’t believe what she did today!”

Zack, Ian, and Tyler were horrified when they heard the story.

“I’ve got to get her back” she said with a splash of mischief temporarily animating her ocean blue eyes.

“Is she single?” asked Zack.

“Duh, *of course!* She’s mean and crazy,” said Amber. “Who would want her?”

“I’ll bet we could find her on a dating site.”

“Oh, yeah. . . . We could blow her profile up and post it all over the school.”

“No, no, no, no,” said Zack. “That is so middle school. We’ll set her up with a fake guy.”

Amber laughed so hard that she almost choked on her turkey sandwich.

“Oh my gosh, that is HILLARIOUS,” she said. “And then when she goes to meet the guy, she’ll see us laughing instead.”

“I don’t know guys. That’s kind of mean,” said Tyler, as she tucked her thick, wavy, black hair into an elastic band.

“Ahhh, who asked you?” said Amber.

“I mean, really. Is she that bad?” Tyler continued in defense of the teacher whom she didn’t even know.

“Heck, yeah, she’s that bad. She gave us a pop test. Who gives pop tests?”

“Okay, then, I guess,” Tyler mumbled.

Amber and Zack were able to find Ms. Speight on TogetherForever.com. They created Michael English, a 38-year-old software engineer. They found a picture of a model who was attractive, but not too attractive to be real. Ms. Speight fell for it hook, line, and sinker.

For about a week, they emailed back and forth. They found out that Ms. Speight was the youngest of four children. She was an avid runner and a world traveler. They also found out that she had done missionary in Africa and South America.

Mr. English and Ms. Speight were supposed to meet at Barnes and Noble on Friday night.

The Wednesday before they were supposed to meet, Ms. Speight responded to the question: “I’ll bet you hate teaching, especially the freshman.”

“Oh, no! I love my job,” Ms. Speight replied. “I certainly don’t do it for the money. I actually make a pretty good living from my freelance work as graphic designer. I know it sounds sappy, but I really do love these kids---especially the freshmen. I am hard on them, but it’s only to make them better students.”

At the sight of this email, Amber got a sick feeling in her stomach. *What was she going to do?*

“I don’t know if we should go ahead with it, Zack,” she said. “Maybe she isn’t such a monster after all; maybe she is actually human.”

“Well, what are we going to do?” asked Zack.

Friday night, Zack, Kelly and Amber sat *incognito* in Barnes and Nobles. They saw Ms. Speight come in. She wasn’t wearing her glass. Her hair was loose in a wild, wavy afro. She had on a black sweater turtleneck, some nice jeans and boots.

“Oh my gosh,” said Zack. “Who knew Ms. Speight was actually hot?”

They sat and watched her talking to someone, laughing on her cell phone. She looked so, so normal. She looked nothing like the dragon that stood in front of the classroom in Room 16.

She looked cool at her watch. It was five past eight. She was probably starting to wonder if he would show up.

At 8:07 p.m., Matt the Black Cola guy showed up, clean shaven with a burgundy polo on and dark jeans. They saw him mouth the words, "Is this seat taken?" He had perfect white teeth.

Ms. Speight smiled nervously and he sat down.

They must have talked for hours, because Zack and Amber hung around the bookstore for a couple of hours, and when they left, Ms. Speight and Matt the Black Cola guy were still talking.

"Great idea," said Amber to Zack as they walked out of Barnes and Nobles. "I'm so glad that you told the Cola dude that she was going to be here tonight and that he should make his move tonight."

"I know, right?" he said, taking out his Blackberry and emailing Ms. Speight.

I'm sorry, but for reasons that I can't get into, I can't talk to you anymore. I'm sure you'll meet the perfect guy really soon. You're an awesome teacher and a wonderful person.

Peace and God Bless,

Michael English

Answer the following questions about the selection.

1. What point of view is this story written in?
2. How would this story have been different if had had been written in first person from Ms. Speight's point of view? (paragraph)
3. What are some clues that Ms. Speight is not as mean as Amber and her friends once thought? Use specific examples from the text.
4. What is the theme of this story?